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YOUNG CAPTAIN KIDD.



The two officers drew their swords, and endeavored to rally the men. But they had not uttered many words ere they were stricken down.

CHAPTER I.

FLOGGED.

"BACK, you cowards! One more step and it's your last."

Clear and high was the voice of him who spoke.

There he stood, upon the schooner's quarter-deck, in all the pride and daring of his youth; a handsome boy of nineteen, well formed and erect, easily and gracefully bearing, as was natural to a son of Captain Kidd.

There was something grand in the bearing of

this young sailor, set off by the becoming costume he wore.

A velvet cap graced his head, around which his raven hair clustered in wavy masses. His blue jacket, with its glittering buttons, extended to the hip, and was open in front, revealing an embroidered shirt with a broad collar, and a silken neckerchief that waved gracefully over his deep, full chest. His pants of white duck, flowing at the bottom, fitted neatly his strong, rounded limbs, and were confined at the waist with a red sash, from which dangled the sheath of the sword, now drawn and poised in his upraised hand, ready for striking.

The face of the youth, smooth and glowing with a healthy vigor, had a dark, oriental tint, that matched well with his intensely black, gleaming eyes, with his regular features and the mustache that gaced his upper lip.

The craft aboard of which he stood was an armed, black, topsail schooner, long and low in the water, with tall, tapering masts, and floating so gracefully upon the calm ocean, tinted with the golden light of the rising sun, that she seemed rather to hang suspended in the thin mist of the morning air than to rest upon the water.

The voice of the captain—a half breed between

a Frenchman and a Spaniard—a thick-set, brutal-looking wretch, hoarsely followed that of young Kidd.

"Cowards! do you fear a boy? Seize him, I say, or by St. Mary, you shall suffer for it! Surrender, you young dog!" he added, drawing a pistol from his belt and pointing it at the youth, "or I will put a bullet through your brain!"

"Fire, Captain Manuel," answered young Robert Kidd, scornfully, "fire, since you *dare* not come within reach of my good sword. You know it is the only weapon I have, or you would stand back further even than you are."

The captain uttered an oath. Stung to fury by the taunt, his fingers were about pressing the trigger, when there was a wild cry, and the graceful figure of another youth was seen to dart forward in front of Manuel, while the slender hand caught him by the wrist.

"No—no! don't fire!" he cried, in beseeching accents.

The speaker was apparently not more than fifteen years of age, with a sweet, although rather effeminate face, long brown hair reaching nearly to the shoulders, and a costume something similar to that of Kidd, except that the collar fitted closer about the throat.

This person, who had shipped under the name of Edwin Bart, was the clerk.

He had been accustomed to do the captain's writing, and to also act as a sort of assistant to Kidd, who had hitherto occupied the position of purser aboard the vessel.

For some reason or other, the captain had lately treated Kidd in a rude, offensive manner, and on this very morning, soon after he had seen him conversing with the clerk, he had grossly insulted him.

In fact, it seemed as if Edwin's friendship for young Kidd, towards whom he had taken a great liking, had something to do with the captain's antipathy to the purser—that it had excited both his rage and jealousy.

Why this was so will be seen hereafter.

Kidd, on being insulted, had quietly retorted, whereupon the captain struck him.

The spirited youth had returned the blow, knocking down the captain, who had then called upon his officers to seize the boy and tie him up in the rigging to be flogged.

The first, second, and third officers, three dark-browed Spaniards, had rushed towards him, but placing his back against the bulwarks, Kidd had drawn his cutlass, presenting to them a front which had made them pause, fearing to advance, and uncertain how to act, though each was armed with a sword.

Well did they know that few men could wield the blade with the skill and dexterity of this boy.

There was something in his gleaming eyes—in his firm countenance and haughty bearing, that made them pause.

His father's soul seemed to look from his eyes, the expression of which was in truth like that of his sire's.

In some respects, however, his appearance resembled his mother's.

She was a beautiful French Creole, whom his father, William Kidd, the famed sea-rover of history, had married and then deserted.

She had given her son an excellent education ere she died.

The boy understood navigation both in theory and practice.

Finally he shipped aboard this schooner, *The Marie*, a Spanish cruiser, half of the crew of which, however, were a mixture of French and English.

These the captain had shipped at New Orleans, having lost his original crew of Spaniards in a terrific gale.

He was a tyrant and a bully, disliked by all except a few, towards whom he showed some favoritism.

Now Edwin's interference, as the captain was about to shoot the purser, seemed to add to his rage.

The veins upon his forehead swelled like whip-cords, his bloodshot eyes rolled in their sockets.

He hurled the suppliant from him and raised his pistol again, when a sudden thought seemed to strike him.

With a terrible oath, he thrust the weapon back into his belt.

"It is too good a death for the wretch!" he roared. "It were better to flay him alive! Sweet satisfaction it will be to me to hear the cracking blows upon his naked back! Seize him, cowards, seize him!" he added to his officers.

A treacherous Spanish boatswain's-mate, with a neck like a bull's and a pair of massive shoulders, had glided along the outside of the bulwarks behind the boy.

He swung himself upon the rail, and was about to drop down on the youth and clutch him by the throat, when Kidd heard a warning cry from his friend Edwin.

He whirled quickly, but the other was now too near him to enable him to use his sword.

He drove the clenched fist of his left hand full against the man's forehead, between the eyes.

With a dull, heavy thud, the boatswain rolled, half stunned, to the deck.

But Kidd's movement had given his opponents an advantage.

Two swords descended clashing upon his own, knocking it from his grasp.

The three officers, assisted by the captain, threw themselves upon him, and he was overpowered.

He was dragged to the main rigging, his jacket was taken off, his back bared to the waist, and his arms were lashed with worming to the shrouds.

Then the boatswain's mate—the same who had been struck by Kidd, came with the dreaded instrument of torture—the cat-o'-nine-tails.

The man grinned horribly.

He was glad of this opportunity of revenging himself for the blow he had received.

"Lay on hard!" said Captain Manuel.

"Lay on hard, sir, it is," answered the boatswain's mate.

The crew had all been summoned to witness the punishment.

Silent they stood, but there was a gloomy look on every face.

Edwin, as pale as death, leaned against the mainmast for support.

"Go on, boatswain's mate!" said the captain, in a hoarse, exultant voice.

Up went the lashes, but ere they could descend, Edwin, with a wild cry, sprang forward and caught the man's arm.

At this the rage of the captain was beyond all bounds.

He pushed the boy so violently that he sent him against the cabin, the edge of which his head struck with stunning force.

He rolled down through the companionway to the foot of the steps, where he lay motionless for several minutes.

Then the boatswain's mate brought the cutting lashes down upon the back of young Kidd with all his might.

They left nine blue streaks upon the snow-white flesh.

The brave youth said nothing.

His lips were compressed, his black eyes gleaming with a baleful light.

Again and again the cutting lashes descended on the bared back.

Small streams of blood trickled from the flesh.

"Harder—harder, boatswain's mate! I want to hear him yell!" cried Manuel.

Fast and vigorously was the dreadful cat applied.

Still not a sound came from the lips of the sufferer.

Even the brutal boatswain's mate now paused and looked inquiringly at the captain.

"Go on!" roared Manuel. "I have not yet done with him!"

Just then Edwin Bart rushed from the cabin.

An ominous murmur, which had been heard among the men, arose to a threatening shout.

Young Kidd was a great favorite with many of them, and they could not stand by and see him flogged to death.

They knew well that the captain would not pause in his merciless work until he had inflicted fatal injuries on the brave boy.

Something gleamed in the air. It was the knife of Edwin Bart, as he quickly severed one of the lashings that held his friend to the shrouds.

"Young Kidd, forever! Hooray!" yelled the seamen.

There was a rush for the quarter-deck.

"Mutiny!" roared Manuel, savagely.

With his disengaged hand Kidd struck the boatswain's mate another terrific blow between the eyes.

Ere the latter could retaliate a tall sailor knocked him down with a crowbar.

"Now you shall die!" cried the captain, placing the muzzle of his pistol against Kidd's temple. "Nothing can save you now!"

But ere the weapon could be discharged, it was dashed from Manuel's grasp by a hand-spike.

The captain rushed further aft.

His first, second, and third officers rushed to his side, and were immediately joined by such of the crew as took part with them.

These were all Spaniards, fifteen in number, making, with the captain and his officers, nineteen men in all.

There was about the same number on the side of young Kidd.

They quickly cut down their favorite from the rigging.

The captain stood glaring at them, but as he had not yet been able to arm his party, he did not interfere.

"This is mutiny! You will pay dearly for this!" he cried.

None of the men answered.

Kidd said not a word, but he gave the captain one terrible look, as he caught up his shirt and jacket, and was hurried forward by the cheering sailors.

CHAPTER II.

THE MUTINY.

CAPTAIN MANUEL had cutlasses and pistols brought up from the cabin, and hastily armed his party.

Meanwhile young Kidd, having said a few words to his deliverers, had gone down into the forecastle with Edwin and one of the men.

The tears were in Bart's eyes, as he carefully bathed with cool water and a sponge, the back of his friend.

"It is nothing," the latter said to the boy. "It is not the wounds of the body that hurt the most."

He was soon dressed and ready to go on deck.

The men had, in obedience to the directions of this youth, whom they almost idolized, turned around the four twelve-pound guns carried by the vessel, so that the muzzles pointed aft.

These guns were all loaded. It was only necessary to prime them, and use the match to fire them off.

So quickly had the men performed their work, that Manuel had no chance to hinder them.

First only one of the guns had been pointed aft, and a man placed at it with a lighted match, to keep the other party at bay.

The captain now looked a little uneasy.

"What would you do?" he said. "You will all be hung if you mutiny! Don't forget that. But if you give up Kidd to me, I will overlook this and say no more about it."

"What would you do with him if we gave him up to you?" inquired the person he addressed, a tall fellow named Ben Wilson.

"It matters not."

"Yes it does."

"Well, then, if you give him up, I will not hurt him—at present!"

"Perhaps we will let you have him, then—that is, if he consents!"

"He has nothing to do with it. On no other condition will I pardon you."

"You will pardon us—upon your word?" said Ben, sarcastically.

"Yes, I give my word."

"That for your word!" said Ben, snapping his fingers.

"Will you give him up?"

"Never!" answered Ben.

"Rascal! Remember I command this vessel!" roared Manuel, furiously.

"No! Young Robert Kidd commands us now!" was the stern response.

"Kidd?" yelled Manuel, black with rage.

"Ay, what say, lads?" inquired Ben, turning to his shipmates.

"Young Kidd forever!" cried all the men, simultaneously.

Then their deafening cheers rolled up to the sky.

In the midst of it all, up came the youth.

In one hand he held a heavy cutlass, in the other a pistol.

He had obtained these weapons in the forecastle. They had belonged to the boatswain's mate.

He advanced straight to the gun near which Ben stood.

"Captain Manuel!" he cried, "your hour has come! Say your prayers, if you know how!"

The captain started back.

There was a terrible look in Kidd's eyes. He knew now that he had aroused the very devil's fierce hate in the nature of the high-spirited boy.

"Give yourself up! I command you!" said Manuel, assuming a bold front. "Remember I am your superior officer!"

"You have shown your superiority long enough," answered Kidd. "It is time now I gave you a taste of mine."

"I see you and the men have long been planning this mutiny."

"It is not half an hour old," answered the boy. "Long before these wounds upon my back shall heal, it will be matured."

"So you really mean mutiny?"

"No; I mean *revenge*!" replied Kidd, sternly.

The captain shuddered in spite of himself.

The boy went on.

"Until now, I have striven to *prevent* these men, lashed to fury by your tyranny, from rising in mutiny. Long have I so striven with them, but it is over at last. At last you have roused all the hell in my nature, and now I am ready to lead them on!"

Edwin Bart threw himself before Kidd with clasped hands.

"Do nothing desperate," pleaded the gentle boy. "Oh, remember, it may be the worse for you in the end. Besides, I—I would not have you perform deeds of blood, you, of all others."

There was a hoarse laugh from the men around the speaker.

But Kidd only said:

"Go below, Bart, this is no place for you."

The boy, casting one long, lingering look of sorrow at his friend, turned away.

"Have at them!" roared Manuel to his followers, noticing that the attention of both Kidd and his men had been diverted from him and his party by Edwin's words.

They all made a rush, discharging their pistols as they came on.

"Fire!" said Kidd, sternly.

The first gun belched forth its contents, and half a dozen of the assailants measured their length on the deck.

The rest got in amongst their opponents ere another gun could be fired.

Although they were in the minority, they had the advantage of being armed, while their antagonists, except the young leader, had only crowbars, axes, and other implements of that sort.

Fortunate it was for young Kidd that he was armed.

The captain made a sweeping blow at him with his sword, but Kidd caught the blow upon his own good steel, and then with a back-handed stroke, shivered the blade of his adversary to the hilt.

The captain stepped back and pulled a pistol from his belt.

Ere he could use it, the youth gave one tiger-like spring, and his blade, whistling through the air, came down upon Manuel's neck, nearly severing his head from his shoulders.

Meanwhile, the other mutineers were making a desperate, but hardly successful resistance against the cutlasses and small arms of their foes.

Two of them had already been wounded, and the rest could do but little execution with the implements they carried.

Young Kidd rushed towards his enemies, and showered his blows so fast and furiously that in a few moments he had laid two of the Spaniards dead at his feet.

All at once, he noticed that the position of his adversaries was such as to bring them directly before the muzzle of the guns.

As quick as thought, he picked up a lighted match, and touched off the piece.

Most of the Spaniards, as the red flame of death leaped from the muzzle, fell, mingling their dying groans and curses with the roar of the gun.

Those not killed by the discharge, numbering now but eight men, retreated further aft.

But the roar of a third gun was heard, and the wretches dropped to the deck, more than half of the small remnant dead—the others begging for quarter, as they threw down their arms.

But those were persons who had smiled and applauded when Kidd was being flogged, and his heart was steeled against them.

All the fiercest passions of the boy were awakened.

"Expect no quarter from me," he said, sternly.

The first, second, and third officers, and the steward, who were the suppliants, continued to beg for mercy.

"Spare them—spare them!" vainly pleaded the gentle Edwin, who had now come aft.

"Rig the plank," was Kidd's command.

The plank was soon rigged.

First the second officer was made to walk it.

He would have turned back, but the points of gleaming cutlasses were around him, pricking him on.

He gave one farewell look at the sky, and moved quickly forward along the plank.

A splash—a gurgling cry, and all was over.

Heavy shot had been attached to his ankles, and he sank to rise no more.

The first officer was the next victim.

He walked resolutely overboard, and his gurgling form disappeared beneath the surface.

The third officer and the steward were the next victims.

"It is done!" said Kidd, gazing at the sea.

The dark, handsome face of the boy wore such an aspect as that of Satan might have borne in the hour of his fall. All the fierce passions inherited from his father had been aroused.

He had been merciless in his revenge.

Edwin Bart stood weeping near him.

"It is terrible," he said. "Oh, Robert, can you ever forget these crimes?"

"Crimes!" said young Kidd, fiercely. "Rather ask me if I can ever forget the bloody stripes upon my back! *They can never be erased! They will mark me to my grave!*"

"How they must pain you," said Bart, laying a hand on his arm.

"*Pain me!*" cried young Kidd, starting back and furiously stamping the deck. "Ay, they sting me to the soul like venomous adders! They will be the *scorpions* of my life! Not the stripes themselves, boy—they will heal; but the *disgrace* can *never heal!*"

"Try and think no more of it," said Bart. "It was dreadful to make you suffer so," he added, the tears again streaming from his blue eyes.

The men stood impatiently watching the boy.

"Had we not better make that milk-sop walk the plank, too?" said one, to Kidd.

The latter turned abruptly.

His face wore an expression that made the man cower before him.

"Attention, all of you!" he said.

The men gazed upon him, and a death-like hush ensued for a few minutes.

It was broken by young Kidd, who pointed towards Bart.

"You all see that boy?"

"Ay—ay—ay!"

"Well, mark my words; the moment you attempt to harm a hair of his head—that moment you make me your enemy!"

"Ay—ay—ay!"

"Remember, this craft is now mine, and I am your captain."

Deafening cheers from all the men showed the intense satisfaction with which this announcement was received.

Kidd then gave orders for the bodies of the dead to be thrown overboard.

This was soon done, and the decks having been washed down, the schooner, before a light breeze, which had lately sprang up, glided along in a southerly direction.

"Sail, oh!"

"Whereaway?" cried young Kidd.

"There, right astern, sir," was the reply.

Surre enough, there was a large vessel which had just emerged from a thin strip of mist, not three miles off.

Kidd seized a spy-glass, and looked at the stranger.

"A Spaniard!" he said, coolly—"a large Spanish sloop-of-war!"

CHAPTER III.

THE DEATH CHASE.

THE men exchanged glances of dismay.

Some confusion ensued among them; a hurried murmuring of voices was heard.

The Spaniard had all sail out, and was evidently bearing straight down upon them.

"It's all up with us!" said one man.

"Ay—ay, we are as good as done for now!" cried another. "He suspects something, and means to board us!"

"Silence!" cried Kidd, in a voice of thunder.

He was at once obeyed.

His cool, daring manner inspired confidence in every breast.

For one brief moment his eagle gaze swept the faces of his crew. Then he spoke.

"If there be a man among you who feels afraid—one who would so lose his self-possession as not to be capable of obeying me—even though the red death of yonder vessel's broadsides should rake us from stem to stern—if there be such among you, I say, let him speak!"

Out from their sheaths leaped the cutlasses, with which all had now armed themselves.

They waved them about their heads, and as the blades clashed together, their shouts rent the air.

"Young Kidd forever! Kidd to the death! Hey—hey—hey! Horray—horray—horray!"

"It is enough," said Kidd, bowing gracefully, and doffing his velvet cap—"enough, my brave lads, whom I now know I can trust."

Whang! went a gun from the pursuing craft.

The shot, half spent, rolled along the top of the bulwarks, and dropped into the water.

Kidd took no notice of it. He ordered all sail made, and in a few minutes after, the schooner was making the water fly about her bows as she dashed on under royals and flying jib.

Although not a large craft, she carried a good breadth of canvas, that sent her spinning along with great velocity.

"How the fellow came to suspect us, I cannot imagine," said Ben Wilson.

This was soon explained.

A piece of red hunting was found fluttering from the cabin window.

Evidently the captain of the schooner, just before arming his men to attack the mutineers, had instructed his steward to hang out this signal. He had, doubtless, previously seen the man of war astern.

The signal was probably one which was understood in the Spanish navy, as indicating mutiny aboard any vessel on which it was displayed.

Kidd now gave a few quick, brief orders.

Muskets, powder and balls were brought up, and the deck was cleared for action.

It was seen that the sloop-of-war was gaining slowly.

She fired another gun, and this time the shot passing close to Kidd's head, shivered a splinter from the rail.

The young captain never moved.

Near him stood Edwin Bart, who, to the surprise of all the men, looked both calm and resolute.

Kidd ordered all his crew to stand in line before him.

Heedless of the huge Spaniard coming on astern, he then addressed them.

"My lads," said he, "you have agreed to follow me to the death. Besides the dangers of our being pursued and arrested for mutiny, you will, where I am going to lead you, encounter other strange perils—strange scenes and sights—such as mortal man before scarcely ever experienced or looked upon. Listen. You have all heard of my father—of William Kidd—who even now scours the seas in quest of victims and plunder. Him I never wish to behold. I can never own him a friend of mine, although his blood is in my veins. During a visit to the West Indies he first saw my mother, who was a French creole. This was years ago. He married her privately. A few months later he deserted her. I was born. My mother remained at the West Indies, and there I was brought up."

Boong! pealed another gun from the Spaniard.

The shot, with a whirr and a howling sort of noise, passed between Kidd and Edwin Bart, but the young captain, without pausing, went on.

"Before my mother died she told me a strange story, which she had heard from my father, who visited her once, and once only, after he became a pirate. He told her of a large island off the African coast, where there is a lake, reached from the ocean by a river. In this lake untold treasures in gold, silver and diamonds lie buried. A conquered African king sank them there once to conceal them from the sight of his enemies. My father, hearing of the treasures, resolved to obtain them; but when he undertook to reach the lake, he was prevented by such sights and perils as even made his stout heart quake with fear. These perils, these sights were unearthly, supernatural ones.

"Physical perils of the common kind he could have fearlessly withstood, but the supernatural drove him back.

"My lads," continued Kidd, still speaking calmly, although another shot passed so close to him that he could feel the wind of it on his cheek, "he who follows me will have to go through perils both supernatural and earthly. I am going to that lake, which it has long been my desire to seek, to obtain the treasures, which I will divide equally among us all when we get them."

"Ay—ay—ay!" cheered the men. "We are with you, young Kidd!"

Again they drew their cutlasses and clashed the blades together, swearing they would follow him to the end of the world, if necessary.

"Then we are bound to the Wizard Lake!" cried Kidd.

"Ay—ay; the Wizard Lake!" shouted all.

Nevertheless, some of them turned ashy pale, for in those times men generally believed in the supernatural.

It was not long after the days of Salem witchcraft.

And as the wild crew again took the oath, another shot from the Spaniard came with a most unearthly whooping sort of noise, and swept the head of a tall sailor clean from his shoulders, overboard, like a foot-ball.

The man's headless trunk, with a spasmodic sort of leap, tumbled across the bulwarks into the sea.

There was a few crimson bubbles, but the trunk was never seen again.

Many a fierce glance was directed at the Spaniard.

Tom Trueman, the slain one, had been much liked by his shipmates.

"He shall be avenged!" said Kidd.

On came the Spanish vessel.

Now less than two miles intervened between her and the schooner.

But the mist was rolling up from the horizon, and it soon shrouded the pursuer from sight.

Kidd headed his craft more to the westward, hoping to thus outwit the other captain.

Late in the afternoon, just as the lurid rays of the sinking sun had tinted the mist of a blood-red color, the fog right astern was partially dissipated.

Then there was a cry of surprise.

The bows and jibboom of the Spaniard loomed up not half a mile off.

Forward in the head stood a man on the lookout, his back against the bow.

Young Kidd ordered one of the guns to be brought aft and placed upon the horse-block.

He then took from some old iron in the round-house, the shank of a harpoon, about four feet long, having a sharp barb at the end.

This he thrust, point foremost, into the gun.

At that moment the man in the Spaniard's head saw the schooner, which the mist, now lifting a little, had hitherto concealed.

"Sail ho!" he screamed.

That was his last cry.

Young Kidd, having sighted the gun carefully, put the match to it.

A lurid flame—a thunderous roar—a strange, whistling sound.

Unerring had been the aim of this boy, skilled in gun practice.

The sharp barb of the harpoon had passed through the body of the Spanish sailor, impaling him to the wood-work.

The shot, which the gun had also contained, took effect higher up, smashing the spritsail yard to splinters.

A gun roared from the sloop-of-war.

The ball rattled through the rigging, but ere another shot could be fired, the mist again closed thickly about both vessels.

"Tom Trueman's death is paid for," said Kidd, quietly and sternly.

The men cheered.

The young captain maneuvered his craft with a skill that excited the admiration of the best sailors on board.

At night the fog lifted.

The moon arose, but no sign of the Spaniard was seen.

The wind had died away. A dead calm rested on the ocean.

Kidd's gaze was fixed upon one of the Bermuda Islands in the distance.

The Spanish craft might be lying behind those hummock-shaped hights.

Edwin Bart stood by Kidd. His blue eyes were fixed sadly and tenderly on his friend.

"I like not these scenes of bloodshed," he said, softly.

His voice was like a flute.

"And yet you bore yourself well," said Kidd, approvingly. "How would you like to be my second officer, boy?"

"I am ready to assist you all I can," was the soft answer, "but I am not much of a sailor. Besides, I could never kill—never slay, unless it were to save your life."

"Why, my poor lad, it is only in self-defense that I fight. He would be craven who would not do that."

"Would it not be better to go to some place—some island far away, and there lead a quiet, peaceful life?"

"There never will be peace for me!" answered young Kidd, with startling vehemence; "my stripes will ever lash me on to the destruction of all who pursue me!"

"You would find pleasure in doing good; your nature is naturally kind and generous," said Bart.

"Boats coming this way!" roared the man on the lookout, forward.

Kidd ran forward with his glass. There they were, sure enough, three large, well-manned boats, pulling for the schooner.

"They are from the *Spaniard*!" said Kidd. "I can just make out her masts now, in the misty atmosphere, near the island."

Waiting until the foremost boat, which was about a mile ahead of the others, had come within gun-shot range of the schooner, young Kidd pointed one of his pieces with his own hand.

Nearer and nearer drew the boat.

At length its occupants could be quite distinctly made out, their pikes and swords glittering in the rays of the moon.

The boy sighted his piece.

The red flame leaped forth, and the report followed, shaking the little schooner from stem to stern, as the shot sped upon its way.

It was well aimed.

The boat's splinters were seen flying up in the moonlight.

As she filled and capsized, the yells of her occupants, struggling in the sea and clinging to her, were rending the air.

"They will all be lost!" cried Edwin Bart, regretfully.

"I hope so," replied Kidd, as he sprang upon the bow.

But the struggling men were soon picked up by one of the other boats.

The form of the young captain was evidently seen by them—as he stood there on the knighthead.

A cry of rage burst from them, followed by the rattling report of several muskets, evidently carried by the marines in the boat.

The whizzing bullets cut the air about the head of the youth, but he only smiled.

"Come down!" pleaded Bart.

"No," answered the young dare-devil, "not until I see the last of those accursed Spaniards! Ben Trieson!"

"Ay—ay, sir!" responded Ben.

"Bring up one of the powder-kegs—a full one!"

The keg was brought.

Kidd ordered a lighted fuse to be attached to it.

On came the boat, the Spaniards cheering like mad.

Another musket cracked.

The bullet almost grazed Kidd's cheek.

The boat, not ten fathoms off, dashed towards the gangway.

The young captain said something to Ben, in a low voice.

The tall sailor, who had once been a gunner, brought a twelve-pounder to bear upon the boat.

The steersman, as Kidd had expected, was about to sheer to one side out of range, when the youth threw the powder-keg into the boat.

The burning fuse had nearly reached the powder when he tossed it, and now, the explosion took place.

There was a lurid stream of fire, a burst of thunder, and with a yell, half of the boat's crew, blinded, scorched and confused, were blown over into the sea.

"Fire!" roared young Kidd, in a terrible voice.

Whang! went the gun, as Ben applied the match.

The splinters of the boat flew, she turned over, spilling her occupants into the ocean.

In the moonlight gleamed the muskets of the marines, protruding for a few minutes above the water, as they went down with horrid, gurgling cries.

The others clung to pieces of the wreck.

"Fire!"

A lurid flash lighted the sails and the dark rigging of the schooner, as another gun thundered.

The well-aimed shot plowed its way through the already shattered remains of the boats, killing four of the struggling wretches clinging to it.

The despairing cries of the rest were heard astern, as the schooner gathered way before a breeze, which had suddenly sprung up.

Young Kidd headed his craft straight for the other boat, now not more than forty fathoms off.

When he was close to it, the boat sheered off, and a dash was made for the schooner's lee side.

"Up helm!" shouted the young captain, quickly.

The helm was raised in a moment, and the schooner falling off suddenly, her sharp bows crashed through the boat amidships, cutting it in twain, ere it could be got out of the way.

A wild, confused cry arose from the sea, as the schooner dashed on, leaving only half of the boat's crew struggling in the water.

"Thus perish the Spanish dogs who pursue me!" shouted young Kidd, sternly. "For them a bloody wake and a speedy death!"

The crew cheered again and again.

But even while the shouts rent the air, the voice of Kidd rang with startling distinctness on their ears.

"Hands by halliards! Clew down the fore topsail! Clew up the main! Stand by to reef and furl!"

A strange, humming, buzzing noise was heard to windward.

A yellowish sort of haze, and a broad line of whitening water were rolling along from that direction.

The shrill whistle of the boatswain's mate, and his hoarse voice were heard, in quick succession, aboard the Spaniard, who now also began to take in sail.

Scarcely had Kidd's men shortened their canvas, when the squall struck the Spanish vessel.

On she flew towards the schooner, almost on her beam ends, some of her canvas streaming in tatters from her yards.

As yet the schooner did not feel the storm blast, but it came soon enough, pouncing upon her with a roar and an ear-splitting shriek, as if then thousand devils were fighting in the air.

Away she went, showing her heels to the Spaniard, who, in that gale, could not throw a shot.

A deep gloom fell around, relieved, now and then, by a vivid flash of lightning, following which was a deep thunder rolling.

Meanwhile the phosphorescent, foaming waters roared and hissed like serpents about the flying schooner.

Then there was a blinding flash, followed by a crash, as if the very universe were split asunder!

Confused, half-stunned, most of the crew stood motionless.

A crackling, grinding noise was heard for a moment; then, with a terrific snapping sound, down went the main-topmast, hanging over the side, tongues of lurid flame darting along the tarred rigging.

The mast, struck by lightning, had been set on fire ere it fell!

CHAPTER IV.

A NARROW ESCAPE.

DANGLING by the stays and ropes still attached to it, the topmast, half buried in the foaming cauldron of waters, thumped heavily against the schooner's side.

It must soon be cleared away, or it would set fire to the craft.

Seizing axes, some of the men sprang towards the wreck, but the huge seas pouring over the lee-rail like boiling cataracts, drove them back.

Young Kidd snatched an ax from the hands of a sailor.

"Nay, my good lads!" he shouted, "I must show you that I would not send you where I myself would be afraid to go?"

He had fastened a rope, the end of the topsail halliards, about his breast, and now, seizing one of the dangling stays with his right hand, he swung himself across the incoming avalanche of waves upon that part of the broken topmast where the fire had been extinguished by the water.

By the lurid glare of the lantern, and an occasional lightning flash, he was seen, half buried by the rushing billows, plying his ax with energy and vigor.

"All clear!" he cried, at last.

There was a cheer from his admiring crew, quickly followed by a wild cry of dismay from Edwin Bart.

Kidd had suddenly disappeared from sight, swallowed up by the foaming, rushing seas alongside.

Another peal of thunder—a vivid lightning flash.

The men ran to the halliards and pulled upon the rope, but only the severed end was drawn in.

The rope had been accidentally cut by the brave youth while plying his ax.

"Lost!" shrieked Edwin Bart.

A terrific blast—fiercer, louder than any that had preceded it, came booming upon the schooner, seeming to fairly blow her out of water.

Then down she went, plunging into the hissing ocean to her waist. With a sidelong sheer to starboard, she raised herself, shaking her bows clear of water like a half-drowned horse. A strange thrilling cry was heard astern. The schooner, whose headway had been checked for a moment by the plunge she had made, now bounded forward, as if startled by that cry.

The crew hurried aft, and looking over the stern, they there beheld Kidd clinging to a long, dangling rope.

As quick as thought, Ben Wilson formed a noose at the end of the main-brace, and threw it over the head of the youth.

He clutched the rope, allowing the noose to slip over his shoulders.

A moment later he was safely drawn up.

"A narrow escape, sir," said Ben.

"Ay; but for that rope astern, I should have gone," answered the young captain. "The schooner sheering to starboard brought it within my grasp while I was under water."

Then he proceeded to give his orders as if nothing had

happened, heedless of the anxious inquiries of Edwin Bart, who asked him if he had been hurt.

Weakened by the loss of its after-stay, the foretopmast, swaying a few minutes in the wild blast, soon went over with a crash.

It was cleared away without much difficulty, and the schooner, now righting a little, flew on with humming, quivering timbers.

"Spaniard close astern!" yelled one of the men.

A far-extending flash of lightning revealed the war-vessel not a hundred fathoms off.

By that lurid gleam, her men were seen bending over her black sides, and leaning forward from the foretop on the lookout.

She was fast gaining on the schooner.

Soon she loomed through the darkness, not three ship's lengths distant.

"Keep off there at the wheel!" shouted Kidd.

Trumpet in hand, he stood aft, peering through the gloom.

"She will run us down!" cried Ben Wilson. "She is keeping off, too."

"God help us! Here she comes!" screamed Edwin Bart.

There was a roar like thunder as the huge black bows of the Spaniard came crashing towards the schooner's stern.

By the light of her swaying lanterns, her officers were seen peering eagerly at the little craft, while forward a long gun had been sighted, so as to command the deck of the chase, and rake her fore and aft.

"Fire!" came a hoarse voice.

There was a broad, bright flash, a deafening crash mingling with the roar of the elements.

Young Kidd laughed defiantly, as, with a whizzing, rattling sound, the shot flew harmlessly upward through his rigging.

A huge wave had tossed the Spanish vessel as the gun was discharged.

He ordered the steersman to put up the wheel a little more.

The schooner swung off, and the man-of-war went whizzing past, so close that a marlinespike could have been tossed upon the deck.

Kidd laughed and bowed ironically to the enraged officers on the quarter-deck.

A vivid gleam and the thunder of several guns replied to him, but the shot flew harmlessly over the little vessel, as it was impossible to train the guns effectively in such a sea.

"Good-by, gentleman!" roared young Kidd, through his trumpet, as the man-of-war flew on, leaving him astern.

"I should have been glad to return your salute, but my guns being half buried in water, you must excuse me for putting off for some future time."

"Ha—ha—ha! Hooray—hooray!" rang the wild laughter and cheers of his crew.

In such a storm the Spaniard was unable to wear around, and all but his lights finally disappeared, swallowed up in the deep gloom ahead.

An hour later the storm abated. Under foresail, main-sail and jibs the schooner made tolerable headway towards the south and east.

Kidd having changed his saturated garments, summoned his men aft and selected his officers.

He chose Ben Wilson for his first officer, and Thomas Mowbray, a stout young fellow, for his second.

He knew he could rely on both these persons, who were the best sailors aboard.

Towards dawn the hands were set to work rigging new topmasts from spare spars ready for that purpose.

The work was finished in a few days, during which nothing was seen of the Spanish craft, which, it was "charitably" hoped, had gone to the bottom.

It being the intention of Kidd to procure more water

and provisions at St. Domingo, ere starting on his voyage to the Wizard Lake, he now had the whole outside appearance of his vessel changed.

In three days the transformation was complete.

The sides of the schooner were painted of a green color, and the name *Marie* on her stern was changed to that of the *Tiger*.

She was then headed for the West India Islands.

Clear, beautiful weather was for some time experienced.

Under full sail, the craft was kept on without stopping, until one day, when the wreck of a ship, every part of which had been burned to cinders except the bow and keel, was discovered wedged in the cleft of a reef, near an island.

Kidd lowered a boat and pulled to the wreck, from mere curiosity.

He discovered that the figure-head had been broken off and was gone.

It had evidently sunk, having been partly of metal, as a portion of one foot, which was of that material, still remained.

"This was done by a shot," said Mowbray; "nothing else could have knocked off the figure-head. In my opinion the craft was attacked and burned by pirates."

As he spoke, young Kidd pulled forth a broken dagger, which was protruding from a crevice in the woodwork.

Upon the handle, traced in red letters, was the name of his father—"WILLIAM KIDD."

"This tells the story," he said. "My father must have attacked this vessel."

He sighed and threw the broken dagger into the sea.

Then he returned aboard his own craft and continued his course.

Often Edwin Bart, standing by the side of Kidd, aft, would gaze delightedly down into the pellucid depths of the sea, which, when the vessel was among the chain of islands to the north of San Domingo, revealed whole groves of beautiful coral stretching out their arms and branches in many fantastic forms.

Far below the surface they lay, and once during a calm, as Bart gazed at them, he said to his companion:

"How still, peaceful and beautiful it is down there. If there were such things as mermaids, I should almost like to be one——"

"Mermaid?" said Kidd, "you mean merman."

From brow to neck the face of Bart was instantly suffused with a deep, rich glow.

"I—I—meant that," he stammered. "I made a mistake."

All at once he uttered a cry of horror, and placed both hands over his eyes.

"What is the matter?" said Kidd.

"*There—there!*" gasped Bart, pointing downward; "don't you see it?"

Kidd scanned the bottom of the sea for a moment; then a cry of surprise and dismay escaped him.

Ben Wilson, hearing him, also came and looked.

He soon drew back with a shudder.

"I don't like that, sir," he said. "It is a bad omen. Some witch or evil spirit has been working against us; if not, how came the dead one there, and in that situation?"

"There is something marvelous in it," said Kidd, whose cheek had become a shade paler.

"Ay, there he is, sure enough, just as you pierced him with the harpoon," said Wilson.

In fact, far down in the clear depths of the sea, swaying to and fro, near a coral branch, the dismayed spectators beheld apparently the dead body of the Spaniard whom Kidd had impaled, as has been described, to the bow of the war vessel with the harpoon.

True, the body no longer rested against the bow of the vessel.

It was partially supported by the coral branch, but there

was the instrument of death still protruding from his stomach.

The whole form was now covered with a coating of green sea-moss, which also partially obscured the face, but the dull, dead glitter of the sightless orbs turned upward, could be plainly seen.

All the men on deck were soon gazing at this singular apparition.

A thrill of superstitious horror went through the schooner's people."

How could the body have come there, but through the agency of some one of the powers of darkness?

The Spanish crew had, of course, taken in their dead shipmate from the bow and buried him, rolled in canvas.

It was not likely that even had the body been thrown overboard with the harpoon in it, it would have drifted thus far under the sea!

Some evil spirit was at work—some unseen fiend now had control of the schooner, and her fate was in his hands.

So thought the crew of the *Tiger*.

CHAPTER V.

KIDD'S DARING.

ALL the men began to murmur.

Kidd saw the gloomy, disconcerted look that rested on every face.

He sprang in front of them, and his black eyes flashed fire.

"Remember your promise!" he cried. "You have sworn to follow me through everything. If there be one among you who now regrets his oath, he may go. I want no faint hearts with me. Sooner than that would I be left alone—the only man aboard this craft. Go—leave Robert Kidd—desert him in the hour of his need, if so you wish!"

He spoke in a sad voice; his coal-black hair drooped over his brow, and threw a dark shadow upon it; his gloomy gaze was fixed upon his crew.

A light hand fell upon his arm; a sweet, low voice floated in his ear:

"I will never desert you. You will always find a friend in Edwin Bart!"

"Thanks!" said Kidd, grasping the boy's soft hand; "I knew I could rely on you!"

For a moment after there was deep silence.

Then there was a ringing cheer.

His brave band gathered around him and swore they would never desert him.

"We are with you to the death!"

"Young Kidd forever!"

"We will not leave you for all the fiends above or below!" and other cries of the same kind were heard on all sides.

"And now," said Kidd, "let us look into this strange thing!"

Again silence ensued.

The young captain threw off his hat, his jacket and his shoes.

He took off everything but his pants and under garment.

Then he fastened the end of a long coil of rope about his breast, the other end of which he had secured to a pin.

Edwin Bart turned pale.

"Surely you are not going down there?"

He sprang lightly upon the rail and plunged into the sea.

With a shout of admiration at his courage, the men flocked to the rail.

They saw the supple form going down—down through the clear depths.

The coral branches at the bottom seemed to oscillate and spread their arms, as if to clasp him in a death embrace.

And then that horrid thing—the body of the dead Spaniard.

The lifeless eyes seemed to glitter with a scintillant gleam of exultation.

At last young Kidd reached it. He touched it—he moved it—then he began to rise.

Just then something came swooping towards him.

It was a monster about ten feet long, with a bony snout which had evidently been broken off in the middle.

Sharp enough, however, was the jagged edge, to inflict a mortal wound.

The little eyes on each side of the head seemed to shine with a vindictive light.

“Haul, for God’s sake, haul, men!” screamed Edwin Bart.

“Ay—ay, a sword-fish—a sword-fish!” shouted Ben Wilson, “quick, men, or you will not pull up our captain alive!”

The men hauled with desperate energy, and the form of young Kidd arose with rapidity, leaving a silver sort of streak beneath him.

The monster fish gained upon him.

Tom Mowbray seized a cutlass, and kicking off his shoes sprang over into the main chains.

Just as Kidd gained the surface alongside, the sword-fish with a leap, as swift as an arrow from a bow, darted towards him.

It would have thrust its jagged snout clean through his body but for Mowbray, who now drove his cutlass deep into its side.

The unexpected attack turned the creature from its course.

It gave an upward spring, jerking Mowbray’s cutlass from his hand; then down it went, diving into the depths of the sea, with the shining blade still protruding from its form.

Kidd and Mowbray were soon aboard.

“Thank you, brave shipmate,” said the young captain, shaking his rescuer’s hand. “You are well worthy of being my second officer.”

“I am so glad you are safe,” said Edwin Bart, looking up at the handsome youth as he shook the drops of water from his hair.

“Men,” said Kidd, turning to his crew, “we were mistaken. That which we took for the dead body of the Spaniard, is only a half-metal image. It has doubtless been the figurehead of that wreck we saw near here. A sword-fish—probably the same one which pursued me—has left part of its bony snout, which we took for a harpoon, in the image. It must have thrust its snout in and broken it off in trying to disengage it. What more natural than this?”

“But the eyes. We saw them shine,” said one of the men.

“An insect, the one that makes phosphorus, adheres to the eye-balls, that is all.”

At this lucid explanation, the men looked relieved.

There was a murmur of satisfaction among them, and all the rest of the day they frequently talked over the indomitable pluck of their young captain in making the investigation.

The courage shown by him in perils of the common kind had previously won their applause, and now his bravery in facing even what had seemed to partake of the supernatural, raised him still higher in their estimation.

Edwin Bart was the only one who did not seem perfectly satisfied. Often this gentle, blue-eyed boy looked at Kidd and sighed.

“Alas,” he muttered to himself, “would that one so splendidly endowed had not permitted his fierce passions to get the better of him. Would that he had been more

merciful to the wretches he slew. A kinder nature would have made him almost a perfect character.”

A breeze came up and filled the white sails of the schooner.

On she went, gliding over these coral-hearted waters.

And as the days passed on, beautiful sights met the gaze of the watchful crew, and a sweet fragrance was wafted to them over the sea.

They passed isles that seemed to wear whole garlands of flowers.

They saw thousands of beautiful birds of variegated plumage, flashing their bright wings in the sunlight.

They saw paradisiacal groves, clear, limpid cascades scattering spray over white and blue lilies; they scented the orange blossom, and they beheld the tall rows of palms bowing to them as they passed over the long foam streaks that washed the white sands.

In due time an old Spanish fort near St. Domingo, belched forth the thunders of one of its guns as an order to lie to.

In an instant the schooner came up into the wind.

A boat was pulled towards them. It was headed by the commandant—a weazel-faced Spaniard, wearing gold lace and a cocked hat.

He took a pinch of snuff as he stepped on-board and looked around him.

Young Kidd gave him a courteous reception.

“Where from?” queried the visitor.

“Plymouth, England,” answered Kidd, promptly.

“Ha! where bound?”

“To Brazil. I have come here for water and provisions.”

“I am obliged to request you to show me your papers, sir.”

“Certainly, sir; will you step into the cabin?”

“No—no, sir, thank you; my time is precious.”

“Bring the papers,” said Kidd, to his steward.

The man obeyed.

The papers were some which Kidd’s father had once made use of, and which the youth had brought with him in his trunk.

He had erased the old date with a preparation he had, and dated the document to correspond with the present time. As the schooner’s name was the same as that of the craft which his father had sailed, he had not been obliged to alter it.

The commandant scanned the papers closely.

“Correct,” he said. “You may proceed.”

He then took his leave, and the vessel’s head-yards were braced forward.

In the afternoon she came to an anchor in the harbor of St. Domingo, within less than a mile of a huge Spanish frigate.

Scarcely were her sails furled when the captain of the port, a small, thin man, came aboard.

Kidd again showed his papers, which were found to be correct.

“You say you are bound to Rio Janeiro?”

“Yes, sir.”

“Have you any objection to taking a couple of passengers—myself and daughter?”

Kidd and Ben Wilson exchanged glances.

“None at all.”

Ben’s countenance wore a solemn look, and Mowbray, too, seemed surprised.

“I desire to go to Rio. I shall leave a substitute here,” continued the captain of the port. “When do you sail?”

“In about ten days.”

The visitor then arranged with Kidd the terms for his passage.

“You should have a free pass,” he remarked to the youth. “Your vessel,” he added, laughing, “has a sort of piratical look, and our cruisers might trouble you. They

might even suspect that your papers were *forged*, and tow you back into harbor. You should have the pass by all means—a pass with my signature.”

“I know it. Will you give me one?”

“Assuredly, if I go with you, but otherwise I could not, as the government would have to first consent. Since that devil of a pirate, Captain William Kidd, has been preying upon our marine, our cruisers have been more strict than ever before. Do you know, sir,” he added, laughing again, “I might have suspected even you to be a pirate in these uncertain times, but for the small number of your crew.”

“Ha—ha—ha!” laughed Ben Wilson, who stood near.

Kidd also smiled.

Fortunately his papers bore the name of Robert Brown, which was the one under which his father had sailed at the time they were made out.

The official now departed.

There was some money in the cabin, which Captain Manuel had obtained from the government for supplies.

Kidd making use of this, had all his necessary provision aboard in a week.

On the following day, late in the afternoon, the trunks of the passengers were sent aboard.

On the next, the passengers themselves came to the vessel.

The daughter of Don Miguel, the captain of the port, was a beautiful creature of seventeen, with large, black eyes, a clear, olive complexion, and a magnificent form.

Her voice was sweet and musical in its full, womanly tones, which were like those of an organ.

She blushed as Kidd assisted her on board.

Edwin Bart looked strange and uneasy when he saw his captain holding the hand of the young lady.

When she was in the cabin, Kidd gave orders to his first officer to get under way in an hour.

“What will we do with these people?” inquired Wilson.

“I did not think you really meant to take them with us.”

“Nor do I; but I am determined to obtain the pass from Don Miguel. He would not give it to me unless he thought I was going to take him as a passenger.”

“Boat coming from the Spanish frigate,” cried Mowbray, at that moment.

There it was, sure enough; a large boat making for the schooner.

“It’s all right, sir,” said Don Miguel, who had just emerged from the cabin. “Captain Roderigo is a friend of mine. He is coming to see me before I go.”

The boat was soon alongside. It contained, besides the captain and a midshipman, a dozen stalwart sailors.

Kidd received the captain of the Spanish frigate politely.

Don Miguel introduced them. The captain was a corpulent, pompous man, with flat nose, and small, round, twinkling grey eyes.

Kidd invited him into the cabin, and the three were soon seated at a table containing wine and fruit.

“You have a neat little craft here,” remarked Roderigo, glancing about him.

All at once he started, his eyes gleaming with an expression of surprise.

“I should know this cabin,” he said. “What did you say the name of this vessel is?” he added, turning to Don Miguel.

“The *Tiger*,” was the reply.

“No, it is not!” said the captain, clenching his fist in his excitement. “It is the *Marie*!”

Young Kidd sprang to his feet.

“Where is my friend, Captain Manuel?” roared Roderigo, also starting up and glaring at him. “I have been in this cabin often enough to know that it is his! Where is he, I ask you?”

“Where?” said the youth, coolly.

“Yes, *where*? Speak, you rascal!”

“I think by this time,” replied young Kidd, with the most imperturbable coolness, as he glided between the portly captain and the foot of the cabin steps, “that he is pretty well on his way to the regions of his majesty, the devil!”

CHAPTER VI.

A SCENE.

For an instant both the captain and Don Miguel stared at the speaker, half stupefied by the cool audacity of his remark.

Roderigo was the first to recover himself.

“There has been foul play here!” he roared, drawing his sword. “Stand back, murderer, and let me pass!”

As quick as thought young Kidd unsheathed his cutlass, and, with one blow, knocked the captain’s weapon from his grasp.

“On deck, there!” shouted Roderigo; but before he could utter another word, Kidd caught him by the throat and hurled him down.

Don Miguel picked up his sword.

“Wretch!” he shouted to the youth. “Let go of my friend, or I will cut off your head!”

And he raised the weapon above Kidd as he spoke.

Meanwhile Roderigo was growing black in the face.

Feeling that there was no time to lose, Miguel was about to strike a deadly blow, when the steward, stepping up behind him, wrenched the weapon from his grasp.

Mowbray, who had been near the cabin, was the only one on deck who had heard the noise below.

He ran down and perceived what was going on.

As Miguel made a bolt for the cabin steps, he seized and held him.

“Everything is discovered, Mowbray,” said young Kidd, as he continued to squeeze Roderigo’s throat. “Better go on deck, and get rid of the boat alongside.”

“Ay—ay, sir; but what shall I do with this weasel?” said the second officer, alluding to Miguel.

“Throw him into the run!”

“Ay—ay, sir!”

The steward expedited matters by taking off the run hatch.

Mowbray poked the little port captain into the run.

“It is the best place for this sow of a war captain, also,” said Kidd. “Come, Mowbray, help me put him in there.”

The second officer, who was a powerful man, seized Roderigo by the arms, while Kidd and the steward each caught him by a leg.

The frigate’s captain had not yet sufficiently recovered his breath, after his hard usage, to make any noise.

He, however, struggled violently, kicking his short legs and striving to disengage his arms.

Thus writhing and squirming, the portly captain bore some resemblance to a large elastic football, with two holes punched in it for eyes.

He was bundled without ceremony into the run, falling flat upon his enormous belly directly on top of the port captain, who had been vainly striving to extricate his legs from a coil of rope, which had rolled over upon them.

Miguel gave a yell, as this crushing weight fell upon him.

At the same moment Isabel, his daughter, who had been alarmed by the noise while making her toilet in her room, rushed forth, her disheveled locks of raven hair streaming over her beautiful shoulders.

“Oh, my God!” she cried, “what has happened? Where is my father?”

“He is safe, Donna Isabel,” answered Kidd, courteously, as he closed and fastened the run hatch over the prisoners. “Do not be alarmed!”

“What is the meaning of this outrage, sir?” inquired

the young lady, with flashing eyes. "Why have you put my father down there? Release him at once!"

Kidd bowed.

"I regret that I cannot do so, at present," he said. "But if you will go quietly to your room, he shall soon be at liberty."

"Otherwise we will have to kill him," put in Mowbray. Kidd gave the speaker a stern, reproving glance.

The words, however, had an immediate effect on Isabel. "Santa Maria help us!" she cried. "I believe you are pirates. But spare him, spare my father, and I will do anything!"

"We will not hurt him, be assured," said Kidd. "Please go to your room."

Without another word, the beautiful girl obeyed, locking herself in.

Meanwhile Mowbray had gone on deck.

The boat's crew and the midshipman still occupied their places on the thwarts.

The schooner's anchor was up, and the men were sheeting and hoisting home.

As the white canvas was tautened the vessel gathered way and was soon forging swiftly out of the harbor before a spanking breeze.

In the coolest manner imaginable, Mowbray, having said a few words to Wilson, cast the boat's warp off the pin, leaving the light craft drifting astern.

The surprise and anger of the little midshipman were extreme.

He bawled and gesticulated furiously, but was only answered with a hoarse laugh.

Then he ordered his crew to take to their oars, and the boat dashed on in vain pursuit after the schooner.

The latter was at this time about a league from the Spanish frigate in the harbor, and the gathering shadows of night almost concealed the war craft from the gaze of those in the boat.

At length the boat, now nearly two miles astern, was lost to the view of the men on board the *Tiger*, although a lantern, which had been lighted by her crew, could be plainly seen.

Wilson, leaving Mowbray in charge of the deck, went below.

He found young Kidd seated on a lounge, smoking a cigar.

"I suppose," said the youth, "that by this time the boat is pretty well astern."

"It is," replied Wilson.

"Do the frigate's people seem to suspect anything wrong, as yet?"

"No, sir, but I dare say they soon will. They must have seen us getting under way."

"Have a sharp lookout kept."

"Ay—ay, sir. I have posted the men in good positions."

"Well, you will now help me to get the captain out of the run."

The youth spoke for a few minutes longer in a low voice to Wilson; then the two unfastened the run-hatch and opened it. Both the port-captain and the other now made vain efforts to grasp the combings of the hatchway, which were too high for them to reach.

"Accursed pirate!" cried Roderigo, in a rage, "you shall pay dearly for this insult to one of his majesty's officers!"

"Do you mean that?"

"Santa Maria, yes! I will blow you and your vessel to pieces!"

"Perhaps you will never have the chance."

"How? What do you mean?" cried Roderigo, turning pale.

"I mean that you may not soon reach your frigate."

"Hah! you dare not—you dare not kill——"

"You shall see what I will dare," said young Kidd.

"Rig the plank!" he added, in a low, deep voice, to Wilson.

"Ay—ay!" answered the latter.

"Good God!" cried the port-captain. "The rascal is going to make us walk the plank!"

Roderigo's face became of a livid hue.

"Curse you!" he said to Kidd, "you will not dare to treat one of his majesty's officers in that way!"

"Wait a few minutes, you porpoise, and you shall see," said Wilson.

"Porpoise—thunder! if I only had a sword!" roared Roderigo, livid with rage. "He dares to call the commander of one of his majesty's finest frigates a porpoise!"

"I hope you will think twice," said the port-captain, tremulously, to the youth, "before you doom me to so terrible a fate. Think of my daughter; for her sake——"

"I will consider what you say," replied Kidd, "after I have rid myself of this nuisance," looking at Roderigo as he spoke.

"All ready!" called Wilson from above, a few minutes later.

"Send some armed men down here!" ordered Kidd.

Four stout fellows were sent. They entered the cabin with drawn cutlasses.

Kidd directed them to help the frigate's captain out of the run, which they did with some difficulty, owing to his weight.

"Resistance is useless," said Roderigo, as he shook himself clear of the men and drew himself up. "I have but one favor to ask," he added, glaring at Kidd, "and that is that I may be shot instead of being made to walk the plank. That were a more fitting death for one of his majesty's officers!"

A peculiar smile curled the young captain's lip.

"I will have to use the plank!" he said, decidedly.

"Ten thousand curses light upon your head!" cried Roderigo; "I never thought to live to be disgraced!"

"Bear it like a man, Roderigo!" called the port captain from the run. "I will give a good account of your gallant behavior when I get ashore."

"The devil you will!" puffed out the frigate's commander. "If I am not mistaken, you are to meet the same fate as myself."

"Away with him!" said Kidd to his men.

Having waited to see the steward again fasten down the run-hatch, the young captain followed the four sailors with the prisoner on deck.

The moon was now shining bright, lighting up the deck and the sea, and revealing the man-of-war's boat far astern.

The schooner's head yards had been braced up sharp, and the craft was lying to.

Roderigo directed a glance towards the harbor, where he could just make out among the masts of the vessels anchored there, the lights of his own stately frigate.

He sighed, and something like a tear glistened for a moment in one eye, whence it gradually emerged, rolling down his fat cheek.

Then he looked for the plank, but he could not see it.

He was, however, led to the gangway.

A thick, heavy plank secured by a warp to the vessel, was alongside.

A tackle, which had been rigged at the main yard-arm, was then lowered, and the bight of a rope was secured about Roderigo's breast.

Into this the end of the tackle was hooked.

"Hoist away!" shouted Kidd.

The wondering captive felt himself jerked upward, off his feet, and swung outward.

He writhed, squirmed, and kicked, turning as red as a live coal in the face from sheer anger.

"Ha! how? What means this? What are you going to do with me?" he spluttered.

One of the men pulled him inboard again, and fastened a lighted lantern to his back.

Then he was swung outward, and, amid shouts of laughter, he was lowered to the plank alongside.

This he straddled, as he was obliged to do so, and the next moment, a man descending into the chains, unhooked the tackle.

The warp was then cut and the plank shoved off, while the captain was making vain efforts to clutch the chains.

To save himself from falling, he was now obliged to stoop and grasp the plank, and in this position he drifted astern, the lighted lantern at his back forming a bright beacon.

It aggravated the frigate's captain, who, more than once, was seen to turn and shake his clenched fist at the crew.

Never before was a frigate's commander so vilely outraged.

CHAPTER VII.

THE SQUALL.

YOUNG KIDD, fearing that the people in the frigate's boat might not notice their drifting captain, now ordered one of his guns to be fired to attract their attention.

This had the desired effect. The beason was seen, and with a night-glass, Kidd was soon enabled to perceive that the cutter's crew were pulling towards their outraged commander.

The youth then squared his head yards, and the schooner leaving the harbor further behind her every moment, made the water fly from her bows.

Remaining on deck until, with the aid of his glass, he had seen Roderigo picked up, Kidd went below and helped the port-captain out of the run-hatch.

"Miserable young man!" cried the prisoner, trembling, "I suppose you have now come to treat me as you have my friend? I suppose he is drowned by this time?"

"I have done with him!" answered Kidd, with assumed sternness. "Thank fortune! I am rid of him now!"

"He died bravely?"

"He was game to the last," repeated Kidd, with difficulty restraining a smile.

"I will make a good report of him," said Miguel. "You have me in your power, now, young man; but I am not afraid of you, and I say boldly that my friend shall be avenged!"

"I admire your pluck," was the reply, "and now I have to inform you that if you would not share his fate, you must give me one of those excellent free passes of which you spoke."

"That! after you have made one of my dearest friends walk the plank? You must think me mad!"

"Come, sir, I have no time to spare. Choose between the 'plank' and a free pass—a pass signed with your name in full."

Don Miguel fumed and stormed, but all to no purpose. Kidd was resolved to have the pass.

Suddenly Isabel made her appearance.

On learning from her father what the young captain required, she begged him to comply with Kidd's request.

"I would die first!" cried Don Miguel, who, however, had made up his mind to grant what was required of him sooner than lose his life.

He permitted his beautiful daughter to beg and plead with him awhile for the sake of appearances; then, as if at last overcome by her solicitations, he said:

"Well, be it so. Were I alone, I would sacrifice my life sooner, but my daughter's welfare must be thought of." Reluctantly he made out the pass, and gave it to young Kidd, who, folding it, after having seen that it was all right, put it in his pocketbook.

"I hope you will now take us back to the harbor," said Don Miguel.

"You shall be sent back," answered Kidd.

He went on deck, and ordered Wilson to wear ship.

"Wear ship?" cried the first officer, in astonishment. "The frigate will have us, if we do."

"No; she suspects nothing, as yet," said Kidd. "When they see us coming around, they will think everything is right, even though our movements puzzled them before."

"Yes. Besides, the boat has not yet got half way back to the harbor."

"We must try to signal that boat when near enough."

The schooner was soon brought around.

She gained rapidly on the cutter.

Kidd fired a gun to attract attention.

Her men then stopped pulling, sitting with their oars suspended, now about a mile and a quarter distant.

In the stern of the boat stood Roderigo, gesticulating and talking rapidly.

All at once the men commenced pulling towards the schooner.

"The plucky game-cock means to attack us," said Wilson. "He has a swivel in the boat."

"He will soon change his mind. Of course he will not dare to face our guns as he is."

Roderigo, when a mile from the schooner, stopped.

A blue lantern had been raised above her stern, and was being moved up and down.

It was answered by a rocket, which shot gracefully upward from the deck of the frigate.

Then the piping of the boatswain's whistle was heard aboard the Spaniard.

"No time to lose, sir," said Wilson. "That lantern was a signal for the frigate to get under way, and they are now raising the anchor. She will soon be after us!"

Young Kidd ordered the gig—a small boat astern—to be lowered.

It was soon alongside.

Men were then sent below to bring up the passengers' trunks.

These not being large or heavy, were quickly deposited in the boat.

A moment later Don Miguel and his daughter came up on deck, ready to go ashore.

Young Kidd offered his hand to Isabel, who did not refuse the proffered assistance.

"I hope you can pull an oar," said Kidd to Don Miguel. "You will reach your friends all the sooner if you can."

"There is no need of pulling," replied Miguel. "The other boat will come up to me. By the way, it is a wonder," he added, sarcastically, "that you did not make us swim to it."

"You will lose your boat, sir," said Isabel, looking up at Kidd, as if to smooth over her father's remark.

"I am willing to, for your sake," answered Kidd, raising his cap and bowing.

"No more words with the rascal!" cried Miguel to his daughter. "You have said too much already."

The young lady blushed, but made no reply.

The warp was cast off, and Kidd now wore around to make as good speed as was possible from the frigate, which could sink him with one broadside.

"Better take in sail, sir," suggested Wilson, pointing to windward, where one of those sudden squalls, common to this region, was bearing down upon them.

Kidd looked toward the frigate.

Her anchor was not yet lifted, but it soon would be, for the dark forms of men were seen swarming aloft to make sail.

Evidently Roderigo noticed the approaching squall.

He hoisted a red lantern, and the sounds of labor aboard the frigate ceased at once.

The lantern had been a signal to suspend work for the present.

The squall was coming in a direction which might drive the vessel ashore were she to weigh anchor in the face of it.

Kidd saw all this at a glance.

He gave a few rapid orders, and the little schooner was soon under close reefed main fore top-sails, topmast, stay-sail and jib.

Roderigo had seen the boat containing Isabel and her father, and was now making toward it.

He was within ten fathoms of it when the full fury of the squall burst upon him.

Kidd kept his night-glass upon the gig in which were his late passengers.

Roderigo had nearly reached the little craft through the foaming, turbulent waters, when over it went!

It had capsized!

"Down with the wheel!" shouted young Kidd.

This was done, and the schooner, with a jerk that almost took the masts out of her, came up into the wind, and lay to in the roaring gale.

The moon still shone but the dark haze of the squall threatened to soon obscure it.

Sparkling with phosphorous, the broad, foaming expanse of the roaring ocean glittered as if sown with countless gems.

The wind was now blowing toward inland, in which direction the schooner was drifting.

But Kidd thought nothing of this.

His whole attention was fixed upon the capsized boat.

Don Miguel had been drawn safely into the cutter, but he could see nothing of Isabel.

"Good God, she is drowned, and I am the cause of her death!" groaned the conscience-stricken youth.

"I am glad to hear you talk like that," said Edwin Bart at his elbow. "It proves that you are not at least cruel enough—"

"Silence, boy!" interrupted the young captain. "Do you see anything of her?"

"Of the girl? No, sir."

"Cowards! they are leaving the spot. Why don't they stay and look for her?" continued Kidd.

He alluded to the cutter's crew, who were now apparently heading towards the island.

"They cannot help it," said Bart. "The wind and the waves drive them against their will."

"Ay, boy, you are right," said Kidd. "They are vainly trying to pull against it."

All at once he gave a shout.

"There she is! I see her clinging to one of the capsized trunks!" he cried. "Down with the quarter-boat!"

Trieson gave the order; then he said to his young captain:

"This delay may prove fatal to us. Already we are drifting ashore. The squall will soon pass to leeward, and we will have the frigate close at our heels."

"I care not," answered Kidd. "I will save that girl's life, though we all hang for it."

Edwin Bart clung tremblingly to his arm.

"You are not going?" said the gentle boy.

"Yes, I am going," answered the youth, breaking away from his friend. "Arm yourselves—ten men for that boat!" he added, to his crew.

Provided with cutlasses, the men, with Mowbray and Bart, sprang into the boat, after Kidd, who had thrust a pistol in his belt ere he entered the light craft.

He gave the word to pull ahead, as the warp was cast off, and away went the boat, driven along by wind and sea with such speed that the crew could scarcely use their oars in the boiling water.

The young captain kept his night-glass fixed upon that point where he had seen Isabel.

Ere long he saw her again, still clinging to the trunk, and he kept the head of the boat to the sea, in which way he was sure to reach her, could she hold herself up long enough to enable him to do so.

The haze of the squall passed over the moon, but in those white phosphorescent waters Kidd's keen gaze still took in that dark form tossing in the cauldron of foam ahead.

He was soon near enough to hear the cries of the poor girl, as faint as an infant's in the din of the storm.

He shouted back, cheerily:

"Hold on, hard, and I will save you?"

Just then, the violence of the squall, which was passing to leeward, began to abate.

The cutter whirled around, and her men were seen pulling with might and main towards Kidd's boat.

"Hadn't we better head back for the schooner?" said Bart. "The young lady has a good hold of the trunk, and as the cutter is not far off, and is coming this way, it will soon pick her up."

"Hush! do not say that again!" cried Kidd, sternly. "You can see that the poor girl cannot hold on five seconds longer!"

Bart hung his head, and but for the gloom the young captain might have seen tears in his gentle eyes.

Meanwhile, on came the cutter, but it was still many fathoms off, when Kidd's boat glided alongside of the imperiled girl.

She was helped into the boat, and the trunk, which proved to be her own, was taken in after her.

She was now so weak that she could not utter a word. She fell back, as her preserver lifted her over the gunwale, almost fainting, her head drooping upon his shoulder, her long, wet hair streaming over his breast.

As he thus supported her, her heart fluttering like that of a frightened bird against his bosom, Kidd felt a wild thrill of pleasure new to him—a thrill which sent the hot blood coursing like lightning through his veins.

Then why did gentle Edwin Bart frown? Why did he press both of his small hands over his eyes as if to shut out the vision of his friend holding that dark, beautiful girl to his breast.

She opened her dark, magnetic eyes—they gleamed upon the handsome youth through the partial gloom, and she even smiled as she disengaged herself from his arms.

"Thank you," she said, in the rich, organ-like voice that most men like. "You have saved my life! My father's I know was saved by others!"

Then she caught sight of the approaching cutter.

"They are coming for me!" she cried, joyfully.

"Men," said Kidd to his crew, "prepare yourselves! There are four more in that boat than we have, and they have a swivel, but I hope you will all do your duty!"

"Ay—ay—ay!" was the sturdy response.

"Ah! I did not think!" cried Isabel, clasping her hands. "There will be a fight—bloodshed—if you wait for them to come up!"

"Ay!" said Mowbray, "and I am thinking we will get the worst of it." As he spoke he pointed towards the frigate, upon which the moonlight was now pouring its radiance from the clearing heavens.

The boatswain's whistle had sounded, and the broad canvas drooping from the yards betokened that the craft was about getting under way.

Kidd laughed recklessly.

"Never mind," he said, as he bowed to Donna Isabel. "We will restore you to your father, even though we wade through a hurricane of shot and shell."

"Nay!" cried the young girl, quickly. "I will not have it so! Hasten back to your schooner! You shall run no further risk for me, sir. At a future time, when there is no danger, you can land me somewhere on the island."

"As you wish," answered Kidd. "But only say the word, and we will take you to the cutter."

"No, I say no!" cried the beautiful creature, almost imperiously. "There shall be no blood shed on my account!"

"I knew it would be so," murmured Edwin Bart, sadly. "It is fate!"

"Give way, lads!" cried Kidd, as the huge frigate now slowly came forging out of the harbor.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE PILOT.

THE men in the cutter exerted themselves so that they gained on Kidd's boat.

"I must request you to crouch down in the bottom of the boat," said the young captain, to Isabel.

"Why?"

"They are sighting the swivel. In a moment they will fire."

The girl looked toward the cutter.

She saw the little gun leveled toward the boat, and a man behind it with a lighted match.

"I cannot believe they will fire, knowing that I am here," said Isabel.

"They will aim high, so as to try and hit some of the men," answered Kidd. "They know you will crouch down."

"They are mistaken," cried the young girl.

As she spoke, before any one could prevent her, she arose upright in the stern.

Then waving her arms toward the cutter, she called out, in a ringing voice:

"Don't fire!"

"Down, my child—down!" called her father. "We will fire so as to hit only the men."

"No!" replied the queenly girl, drawing herself up. "I will not move an inch from where I stand!"

Thus baffled, the frigate's captain uttered a cry of rage.

A few minutes later the cutter stopped, as it was already too near the schooner.

The boat was soon after directed alongside, and Kidd assisted Isabel on deck.

As soon as her trunk had been carried below, and the boat had been hoisted to its place, the young captain ordered all sail to be made.

The broad canvas spread and filled in the breeze, and away went the little craft with the water roaring about her bows.

Meanwhile, the frigate was dashing on in pursuit.

Isabel, coming on deck, after she had gone to her room and changed her saturated garments, stood, by the weather rail, watching the stately man-of-war with a flushed cheek and anxious eyes.

Trieson and Mowbray also looked anxious, for the huge vessel would soon be near enough to disable the schooner with her enormous guns.

Kidd alone remained calm and unconcerned.

All at once a thick fog cloud to windward, upon which his gaze had been fixed, rolled along over the water, enveloping both vessels in a misty shroud.

"You are in great danger, sir," remarked Isabel to the young captain.

"Not in so much now," answered Kidd. "The fog hides us."

"It will soon roll away," said Isabel.

"I must do my best while it remains," responded Kidd.

He was about to give orders for changing the course of the craft, when Isabel said, hurriedly:

"I know not what you are, sir; but I know you have saved my life, and that at your own risk. Had you not stopped to pick me up, you would not now be in this predicament."

"Believe me, Donna Isabel," he replied, "when I inform you that I am no pirate, as your father and the frigate's captain seem to think. I only war on those who pursue me."

"I do believe you," answered the girl. "And now I have to say, that, as you have saved my life, it is but right that I should endeavor to save your vessel and crew."

Kidd smiled.

"I have deserved no thanks for what I have done," he said.

"I think differently, sir," said Isabel, with a slight toss of her head. "Now listen; I will pilot your craft to a hiding-place where you can remain until the frigate is far from you. I know

the place well. I have often been there with my father. Will you trust me?"

"I would trust you with more than my life, if that were possible," answered Kidd.

"Then lose no time. Head your craft about southeast."

This Kidd did at once, bracing up his yards for that purpose.

The schooner, making good headway, at length approached a rugged mass of rocks looming up from the sea.

All at once a skiff shot alongside out of the mist, which still veiled the water.

In this skiff was a short, dark man, who stood up and sang out:

"Pilot?"

"Say yes," whispered Isabel to Kidd.

"Ay—ay, we want a pilot," answered the young captain.

The man had already dexterously made his skiff fast by its warp to the schooner's main-chain, and he now sprang aboard.

On seeing Isabel, who was fully revealed by the light of the lantern in the rigging, he uttered a cry of surprise, and taking off his cap, made a low bow.

Isabel slipped a gold piece into his hand.

"Guide this vessel safely to the Black Cave, Pedro," she said, in a low, distinct voice.

The pilot again bowed.

He asked no questions, but took his place at the wheel, and with Kidd's permission, began to give his instructions.

In due time his voice rang out, sharply:

"Stand by the cable!"

A moment later the anchor was let go, down came the yards, and the schooner swung to.

By the light of their lanterns, the crew could perceive that they were now in a lofty cavern, whose rugged sides arose around them.

Pedro stood looking keenly at young Kidd.

After a while he turned to the girl.

"Shall I row you to the island, now, Donna Isabel?"

"No," she answered.

Pedro bowed, and moved towards the gang-way to enter his skiff.

"Do not let him go," hastily whispered the girl to the young captain. "You cannot trust him. I fear he will betray you!"

But even as she spoke, the pilot sprang into his skiff and untied the warp.

"Come back here!" called the young captain.

The pilot made no reply, but seizing his oars, pulled swiftly out of the cave.

"Come back, or I fire!" repeated Kidd, drawing his pistol and leveling it at the dim form of the man.

A defiant laugh was the response.

The youth pulled the trigger, and the sharp report of the weapon rang out.

Again there was a defiant laugh, proving that the bullet had missed its mark.

Kidd promptly lowered the quarter boat, and was soon in chase.

He dashed up alongside of the fugitive, and springing into the skiff, caught the man by the throat.

Something flashed before his eyes. It was a dagger aimed by the pilot at his heart.

He caught the man by the wrist, just as the point of the blade touched his skin.

With a sudden powerful jerk, the pilot disengaged himself from Kidd's grasp.

As some of the crew were about to seize him, he rolled over the side of the skiff headlong into the sea.

CHAPTER IX.

IN A TRAP.

THE moon now being hidden by clouds, the boat's crew could not see the water distinctly.

They peered through the gloom, hoping to get a glimpse of the pilot when he should regain the surface.

But they looked in vain.

"Either the rascal has swam too far away under water for us to see him, or else he has not come up," said Mowbray.

The boat was pulled hither and thither, and Kidd was obliged to return aboard without having found the man.

"I am sorry you did not find him," said Isabel. "He will certainly betray you."

Kidd held a consultation with Wilson and Mowbray.

The latter seemed to think that the pilot had been snapped up by a shark after he dove, and had not therefore arisen to the surface at all.

"It may be so," said Wilson. "But it is best

to be cautious. He may even now be on his way to bring some government vessel to the cave."

It was finally resolved to get under way in half an hour.

The boats were accordingly got ready for lowering, that as soon as the anchor was up, the men might be set to towing the schooner out of the retreat.

Meanwhile one of the crew had climbed to the summit of the cave-rock, and was keeping a lookout.

Far in the distance he could see the lights of the frigate.

All at once, emerging from behind a broad mass of rocks, not a hundred yards off, he beheld the dim outline of a craft, heading towards the cavern!

So sudden was the appearance of this vessel, and so swift was its speed, that the lookout scarcely had time to give warning to Kidd, and to get back aboard the *Tiger* ere the stranger was half way to the opening of the cave.

On she came, and she was soon so near that the schooner's people could perceive that she was an armed brig, painted black, with a red stripe, and carrying broad canvas.

"Thunder!" cried Ben Wilson. "We now know where that infernal pilot went to. I did not dream there was a craft so near us, concealed by the rocks. The pilot must have succeeded in swimming to her!"

"Arm the men," said young Kidd, in a low, stern voice, "but do not let them show their arms when the follow boards us. We will try the effect of the port captain's free pass, ere we strike a blow."

Wilson hurried away to give the order. Then Isabel, whose face had become deathly pale as she kept her gaze on the other craft, glided to Kidd's side.

"Your pass may serve you," she said, "but I doubt it. Captain Castello is a shrewd man. I recognize his vessel, the *Dragon*; for see! the moon now lights up every part of the brig!"

"You know this Captain Castello, then?" said Kidd.

"Yes," shrugging her shoulders as she spoke. "Would I had never seen him. He is wealthy and of high family. My father——"

She paused, coloring deeply at having said so much to a comparative stranger.

"Speak unreservedly to me, Donna Isabel," said the youth. "Consider me one of your best friends."

"My father would have me wed with Castello," continued the young girl, "a man whom I never liked. It is because I am anxious to escape his attentions, that I am in no hurry to leave your vessel. I would prefer to have you take me to Rio, where I have an aunt, whom I love very much."

At that moment, the ring of the *Dragon's* cable was heard. She came up into the wind, and anchored within ten fathoms of the mouth of the cavern.

"Schooner, ahoy!" came a loud, clear, authoritative voice from the brig's deck.

"Ay—ay!" answered Kidd.

"You perceive we have you fast! You cannot escape. If you fire a shot, we will sink you!" continued the voice.

"It is all my fault. It is I who wanted to save you, but who, instead, have got you into this predicament," said Isabel, in anguish.

"Do not distress yourself, I beg of you," said Kidd. "Do you know how many guns and men are aboard that vessel?"

"Fifty men at present, I believe," she replied, "and ten guns. You can do nothing, sir, against so many."

"Brig ahoy!" shouted Kidd, cheerily.

"Well?"

"I don't know why you speak as you do. We have no wish to fire upon you. This is a peaceable craft bound to Rio."

"You cannot deceive me," was the response. "Why did you sneak into the cave if you are what you say? The pilot, Pedro, tells me that you are a pirate."

"It is false!" replied Kidd. "To prove it, I can show you a free pass from Don Miguel, the port captain."

"I will come on board," was the response.

A longboat was lowered, and manned by twenty armed men, was pulled for the schooner.

In the stern sat an officer in uniform.

When the boat came alongside, he sprang aboard.

He was a short, stout, good-looking personage, about thirty-eight years of age.

The moment he reached the deck, he took off his cap to Isabel, and bowed low to her, with a mocking smile upon his face.

"Pedro informed me after he swam to my

vessel, that you were here. I do not understand it. Why are you here?"

"Am I, then, accountable to you for my movements?" said Isabel, with flashing eyes.

"Perhaps not; still you will own that it is natural I should be surprised to find you aboard a vessel of this kind."

"She is a peaceable craft bound to Rio," answered the young girl. "Had she not been it is not likely my father would have permitted me to take passage in her, and it is just possible, Captain Castello, that I, too, might have objected," she added, her lip curling disdainfully.

Castello looked surprised.

"Don Miguel gave you passage aboard this craft?" said he.

"Yes, sir."

"Here is the free pass I spoke of, sir," said young Kidd, showing it to Castello by the light of the lantern.

"Humph! it seems to be all right," said the brig's captain, as he scanned the paper. "But why did you come to this cave?" he added, turning suddenly towards the youth.

"A seaman should not ask that question," responded Kidd. "We have had a squall and others are brewing. Don Miguel is coming aboard in the morning to see his daughter once more ere we depart. I deem this a safer place than closer to the island, from which I did not, however, want to go far away."

Castello seemed to reflect.

"I hope you are now satisfied, sir," said Isabel. "This gentleman has sufficiently explained. It is all true."

"It may be or it may not," answered Castello.

"Do you mean to imply, sir, that this lady has not spoken the truth?" said young Kidd, laying his hand on his sword.

"Ho, there! you are quick, young sir," cried Castello. "Has the lady made you her champion! Upon my word," he continued, with fierce jealousy, "things have progressed here with astounding rapidity."

"You have not answered my question yet," said Kidd, unsheathing his sword.

"No, and do not mean to," was the haughty reply. "Defend yourself."

He bared his weapon, and notwithstanding the supplications of both Isabel and Edwin Bart, the two swords clashed together.

The combatants fought with the fury of tigers.

Castello was the most excited. His adversary, finding he had a master of the weapon to deal with, controlled himself, and kept cool and wary.

Meanwhile the crew of the boat alongside, hearing the noise of the affray, rushed aboard.

The midshipman of the boat, a young fellow of seventeen, aimed a pistol at Kidd.

Wilson dashed it from his grasp with his cutlass.

"Foul play!" he cried. "This quarrel concerns only the two who are fighting. There must be no interference!"

The boat's crew, however, were on the point of rushing aft to seize Kidd, and Wilson was about to order the schooner's crew to attack them, when Isabel, drawing herself to her full height, confronted the *Dragon's* men.

"Back!" she exclaimed. "Are you afraid your captain will be defeated? Is he, then, so weak that he needs your assistance to battle with a single man?"

The midshipman, knowing who the speaker was, ordered his men to stand back.

Kidd and Castello still fought furiously.

All at once the Spaniard aimed a swift thrust at the heart of his opponent, whose breast for a moment seemed unguarded.

The point of the sword touched Kidd's skin, when, with a powerful blow, he struck down the weapon.

Infuriated, Castello now showered his blows with a rapidity which it required all the skill of the other to meet.

At length, somewhat fatigued, he moved his sword with unsteady sweeps.

Kidd, who still preserved his strength, dealt three rapid blows, the last of which sent Castello's weapon flying from his grasp.

In a moment the point of his sword was at the breast of the vanquished man, who quietly folded his arms.

"Do your worst!" he said.

The rush of the boat's crew was again heard.

"Get back, men!" roared Castello. "This quarrel concerns you not."

In an instant Kidd thrust his sword into its sheath.

"I respect your courage, sir," he said, bowing. "I spare your life!"

"Thank you, sir," answered Castello, courteously. "Nevertheless, I repeat, as I said before, that I doubt the truth of your statement regarding your vessel."

Kidd's eyes again kindled with wrath, but Isabel now stepped between the two men.

"Enough of this," she said. "You will oblige me, sir," she added to Castello, "by leaving this vessel at once."

The Spanish captain bowed.

"I will go," he said, "since you wish it. But," he added, turning to Kidd, "I shall find out whether or not you have told me the truth about your vessel. I must see the captain of the port, ere I permit you to leave the cave."

He then ordered his crew into the boat, and he was soon alongside of his own vessel.

Here a brief colloquy took place between him and the officer whom he had left in command of the brig, after which his boat was seen heading towards the harbor.

Wilson looked at his young captain.

"There'll be the devil to pay when he gets ashore," he remarked.

"Of course he will then discover everything. What's to be done, sir?"

Kidd reflected.

"I have a plan," he said, at last.

"Well, sir, if you can get out of this trap, with the guns of that brig covering us, I will give you the credit of being the best captain that ever walked a deck," said Wilson.

"My plan may not prove successful, but it is worth trying," answered the youth.

He then said a few words to Wilson in a low voice.

Half an hour later Kidd lowered his longest boat, which was about the same size as the one which had come from the brig.

The boat was lowered without any noise, the sheave-holes of the blocks having been greased, and as the interior of the cavern was dark, the brig's people had no suspicion of what had been done.

At one side of the cave there was an opening, which Kidd had previously noticed.

It was large enough for the passage of a boat, and through it the young captain directed his, as soon as he had manned it with the greater number of his crew, all armed to the teeth.

The boat pushed through the opening, emerging into the sea, where it was now hidden from the gaze of the watchers aboard the brig by an intervening, jutting mass of rocks.

The crew were ordered to "take to" their oars. They pulled with a long, easy stroke, and the rowlocks having been muffled, they made scarcely any noise.

At length, being now far enough away from

the brig to be hidden by the gloom, Kidd headed boldly toward the harbor.

He did not enter it, but when within about a hundred fathoms of the shore, he suddenly whirled the boat around, and having ordered the mufflers to be taken from the row-locks, he dashed straight toward the Spanish brig.

The people aboard that vessel at length saw the boat approaching, and in the dim light, supposed it was Castello's coming back.

"Now, men," said young Kidd, in a stern, low voice, "I hope you will all do your duty."

"Ay—ay, sir," was the simultaneous answer of the hardy fellows, to whom the youth had previously disclosed his plan.

Soon after, the boat dashed alongside, and as one of the men secured the rope, which had been thrown out to him by the deceived sailor on board, the others climbed quickly to the deck, and drawing their cutlasses, rushed, headed by Kidd, upon the Spaniards.

These numbered about thirty—twenty having been withdrawn by Castello as a crew for his boat.

Taken completely by surprise, and all, except the officers, being unarmed, the Spaniards fled aft in confusion and dismay.

The two officers drew their swords, and endeavored to rally the men.

But they had not uttered many words ere they were stricken down by Wilson and Mowbray, each of whom sent an unerring bullet from his pistol.

As the deadly missiles plowed through the brains of the unfortunate officers, and their last dying cry rang upon the breeze, Pedro, the pilot, who had skulked behind the mainmast, picked up a huge club-hammer lying near him, and sprang out suddenly from his hiding place, aiming a tremendous blow at the back of Kidd's head!

Had that blow been dealt, the heavy iron would have broken the young captain's skull to pieces; but Mowbray's quick eye detected the rascal in time, and with the bound of an outraged lion, he caught the handle of the hammer, and wrenched the instrument from the fellow's grasp.

The terrified pilot threw himself partially over the bulwarks, and was about to drop into the sea, when Mowbray brought the ponderous weight down upon his head.

There was a horrible, cracking, crashing sound, and, with a half smothered "Ugh!" the pilot dropped dead upon the deck.

Meanwhile the Spanish sailors, now huddled aft, were begging for quarter.

The schooner's men stood over them with uplifted cutlasses, and were about to strike when Kidd's voice was heard:

"Hold, my lads, we don't want their lives."

He then ordered the Spaniards to lower one of their boats and make off from the brig as fast as they could go.

"Give my respects to your captain when you meet him," he said, "and tell him that you all ran away from fifteen men."

The sailors, glad to be let off so easily, lowered a boat, and crowding into it, were soon paddling shoreward with their hands, aided by the tide, for Kidd had not permitted them to take oars.

"There is no time to lose, sir," said Mowbray, pointing towards the harbor, where the lantern of an approaching boat was seen. "If I mistake not, there comes Castello now."

"What a pity we cannot exchange vessels," said Kidd, looking wistfully around him at the brig's ten guns. "But ere we could work so large a craft, we would have the whole harbor fleet upon us."

"Frigate coming this way!" yelled one of the men, just as Kidd had slipped the brig's cable.

Will be concluded in "Wide Awake Library" No. 383, entitled: THE SECRET OF WIZARD LAKE.

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